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**Commissioner Harris enlists her “front line soldiers” to help save children**

Remarks by Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris for the Annual Meeting of the New Jersey Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (NASW) -- April 28, 2003.  
[Dawn Apgar, President - NJ Chapter, NASW]

ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY -- Proud to count herself among their ranks and energized by their motivation, former social worker and now Department of Human Services (DHS) Commissioner Gwendolyn L. Harris addressed the state's social workers during today's convention lunch at Bally's Park Place Hotel and Casino, today to enlist their help in saving children.

“Social workers are the front line soldiers of helping professionals trying to do battle with society's ills. As social workers, we are committed to working to make a better life for individuals and families, and especially for those in our society who are the neediest, the most vulnerable, the most defenseless.”

“I would hold out to you today that the most pressing battle we face today involves the American family. Indeed, I believe we are in crisis.”

Harris then called on the social work community to come together to help address this crisis in some very specific, and some very new ways.

She described how, when a child is being abused or neglected and when all else fails, New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) - as the agency charged with protecting children - is supposed to step in and make sure that child is protected. That does not always work, as evidenced by the past few months' stories in the state's newspapers that have revealed problems in New Jersey's child protection system.

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